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INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC  
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC  
RHMFISS/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHINGTON DC  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC

UNCLAS MONROVIA 000809

SENSITIVE  
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E.O.12958: N/A  
TAGS: [ECON](#) [EAGR](#) [CASC](#) [ASEC](#) [KCRM](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [LI](#)  
SUBJECT: HEAD OF CONCESSIONS COMMISSION MURDERED

REF: MONROVIA 808 (NOTAL)

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Keith Jubah, chairman of the Public Procurement and Concessions Commission and President of the Rubber Planters Association, was shot to death November 1 outside his home at the Morris Farm near Kakata. Although police have identified three suspects, reports against them remain circumstantial and no information puts them at the scene of the crime. Police are expanding their investigation to other motive areas. In Monrovia, many believe Jubah was killed over a land dispute that arose after the Rubber Planters' Association appropriated idle rubber farms at the beginning of President Sirleaf's administration. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) American citizen Keith Jubah (reftel), chairman of the Public Procurement and Concessions Commission and a longtime ally of President Sirleaf, was killed by three assailants November 1 outside his home at the Morris Farm near Kakata (about 20 miles outside of Monrovia), where Jubah was managing director. Morris Farm is a rubber plantation operated by the Morris-American Rubber Company (MARCO). At approximately 9:00 pm, the attackers called to Jubah as he was returning home. When Jubah exited the car, the attackers shot him, doused his body with gasoline and set it on fire. A woman who was in the house at the time witnessed much of the event.

¶3. (SBU) Two suspects were apprehended on November 2 and a third eluded arrest following information that they made threats against Jubah after he fired them as security guards at the farm. However, UNPOL Senior advisor Jack Nielsen, who is assisting the Liberia National Police (LNP) in the investigation, cautioned that the evidence against them remains circumstantial and no concrete information links them to the scene of the crime. No weapon has been found and no confessions have been made, and the suspects may have an alibi. The LNP is therefore broadening its investigation to motive areas, including a possible land dispute.

¶4. (SBU) An alternative theory circulating among Liberians involves unresolved land disputes from Jubah's tenure as President of the Rubber Planters' Association (RPA). Ernest Jones, deputy minister of Lands, Mines and Energy, and one of the senior GOL officials involved in land reform, suggested that when President Sirleaf took office in 2006, the RPA repossessed and managed many small rubber plantations that had grown fallow during years of civil conflict. The RPA sold rubber from these otherwise idle plantations to Firestone Natural Rubber Company, which had the means to export it for further processing. The original owners of these farms, many of whom had fled when rebels invaded their plantations, believe the RPA illicitly appropriated their land and failed to compensate them, and Jones offered that one of these disgruntled farmers may be behind the murder.

¶5. (SBU) According to Nielsen, LNP Director Marc Amblard, who is presently in Abuja, is following the case closely and seems to be concerned by the developments. He initially complained about lack of cooperation from UNPOL, but Acting UNPOL Commissioner Gautam Sawang has stepped up UNPOL involvement. Nielsen said that the

gunshot wound is consistent with a shotgun (which are permitted under the UN arms embargo) and not with an AK-47 (which are not) as has been reported in the press.

16. (SBU) COMMENT: Whether or not a land dispute motivated Jubah's murderers, the fact that many Liberians believe it to be so underscores the widespread conviction that even long-dormant conflicts over land could erupt into violence at any time. Jubah's role at the Public Procurement and Concessions Commission seems a less likely impetus for his murder. While Jubah competently advocated President Sirleaf's anti-corruption agenda, advocating stricter procurement procedures and transparent concessions processes, he was not known as an aggressive crusader who would have made powerful enemies among those who wished to secure lucrative timber or mining concessions. No matter the motive, the horrifically brutal murder of a prominent government official has sent a shock wave through the government.

THOMAS-GREENFIELD